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Keeping an eye on crime in Subang

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SUBANG Jaya folks are now in the spotlight, with cameras tracking their movements as they go about their daily routine.

Things like stopping by the traffic lights, parking vehicles by the roadside, or grocery shopping and banking errands will be recorded via closed circuit television (CCTVs) in-stalled by the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ).

These CCTVs are connected to a command centre within the MPSJ building, where computer screens play real-time video footage and record the 'live' happenings at areas where the cameras are installed. However, residents need not fear an invasion of privacy as these cameras are meant to curb crimes like robbery and carjacking, as well as to deal with unforeseen problems like accidents and the more nagging petty offences like double-parking.

Some 100 CCTVs have been identified for strategic placement at various places, and all have been fully installed.



Already installed: One of the lampposts where a camera has been fitted.

Inside the purpose-built command centre, state-of-the-art technology beckons with workstations net-worked with each other, and a full screen that displays the GIS system that can be zoomed in for a detailed view of road addresses in housing and commercial areas.

The technicalities involved may sound dizzying, but the front-end has been made as simple as drag-and-drop so that the council's enforcement officers manning the workstations could easily observe the recordings and respond efficiently when the need arises.

Behind the screens, mastermind company Gapurna Technologies Sdn Bhd diligently maintains the system round-the-clock to ensure zero breakdowns or failure.

"We provide a fail-safe system actually," Gapurna Technologies (Gtech) director Imran Salim said.

The company is a subsidiary of the Gapurna Group and has been accorded with Multimedia Super Corridor Status (MSC), specialising in security cameras and features.

"We have our people on standby here daily to assist in the event of anything. Six months ago, when we were brought in to install the cameras, the council and the police had already identified the places where the CCTVs should be affixed.

"The cameras are now all over hot spots like banks, petrol stations, traffic light junctions, pedestrian walkways, and commercial centres to monitor human traffic and issues like parking," he said.



Close monitoring: Enforcement officers and a representative from the police are stationed at the command centre to monitor the cameras.

StarMetro was recently given an insight into the command centre and back-end system in the adjoining room to show how everything works.

Imran said the concept was based on rental-lease, whereby Gtech would pay upfront for the cameras and technology while the council pays a yearly lease to operate the system.

"If the system is not working then our lease would be terminated," Imran said.

"The state liked the idea of this very scaleable system and the leasing concept so they are keen to have it at other councils throughout Selangor.

"After MPSJ, we'll move on to Klang and Petaling Jaya," Imran said.

"The key purpose of having CCTVs is to improve response time. IP cameras will be used in the near future to replace the current analogue ones so that data churned out can be directly transmitted and hardware can be reduced," he explained.

Imran added that the current geographical information system (GIS) would be improved to grid positioning system (GPS) so there would be coordinates that could also show the nearest officer who can take action in any incident.

"A police officer is stationed inside this command centre to make any calls back to his station or headquarters in case a crime happens.

"The council's enforcement officers take turns to man this area on two shifts of 12 hours each," he said.

Imran said there was no delay time in the real-time videos and that everything was timed, dated, and catalogued accordingly.

"The system also allows for playback and repeats if the officer happens to miss something, all whilst the recording is ongoing. There is about 30 Terrabytes of hard disk space that can accommodate 30 days of video storage," he added.

MPSJ president Datuk Adnan Mohd Ikhsan said CCTVs were something new, but the council took the initiative to address such important issues as safety, traffic, crime, and vandalism.

"We signed a 15-year contract with Gapurna," Adnan said.

"In big areas especially, the installation process involved quite a few parties ranging from Telekom and the Public Works Department to the developers and the Malaysia High-way Authority (MHA).

"At the moment, we are into the last stage and everything should be fully operational by the end of January," he said.

Subang Jaya has about 38 cameras, Kinrara has nine, Serdang has 27, and Seri Kembangan has 16.

"These cameras have helped the police identify suspects or number plates of cars as the videos could be zoomed in.

"However, things are still at an early stage, so there is little evidence for police to be able to take action just yet. Hopefully though, crime rates can substantially go down and we can increase public confidence about the safety level on the streets," said Adnan.

This is not the first time the council has dealt with cameras. It had previously installed 33 cameras inside its own building, and the 3C Complex.

Imran said he was keen on working closely with the council and police to come out with operation modules and guidelines that would help to improve efficiency of the overall system.

"The council was very open to the idea of such progressive technology. Enhancements and new features would be added from time to time, so things will get better," he said.

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